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Draft report

Addendum

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Programme questions

Proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001

Programme 28. Economic and social affairs

1. At its 14th and 15th meetings, on 12 June 1998, the Committee considered revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. It had before it the proposal in respect of programme 28, Economic and social affairs.

2. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs introduced the proposal and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. The view was expressed that the United Nations played a unique role in international cooperation for development and that development should remain at the forefront of its agenda. This overriding priority must be fully reflected in the medium-term plan.

4. The view was expressed that in addressing economic, social and environmental issues, the Secretariat should maintain a balanced approach in accordance with the priorities identified by the relevant bodies of the United Nations.

5. The view was expressed that in line with the outcome of recent major international conferences on development, including the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly on Agenda 21, the United Nations should play an important role on cross-sectoral issues such as mobilization of financial resources, technology transfer, technical assistance, capacity-building, dissemination of data, exchange of experiences, etc. Therefore, the

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Secretariat should take the steps necessary to fully integrate such policies and activities in its work and undertake the coordination role required in that regard.

6. The view was expressed that it was necessary to elaborate further on the manner in which the Secretariat intended to improve system-wide coordination, which is crucial for the success of the process of implementing and delivering programmes in a comprehensive manner. A further view was expressed concerning the need to ensure adequate coordination of technical cooperation activities, which should remain one of the priorities of the new Department, and to elaborate further on the issue of the promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences, which had not been adequately treated in the proposed narrative of programme 28.

7. The view was expressed that in paragraph 28.4 of the proposed revisions, reference should be made to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat); in paragraph 28.5, the references to the normative work and to the standard-setting role of the Secretariat needed to be elaborated further; and in paragraph 28.6, the reference to the policy management function of the Economic and Social Council should be reviewed since it could lead to misinterpretation of the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations in terms of conflicting with the policy-making role of the General Assembly.

8. The view was expressed that the narratives of various subprogrammes were not consistent since some subprogrammes described objectives and others listed activities. While the overall objectives presented in paragraph 28.5 were endorsed, it was felt that their achievement would be difficult to measure in the absence of performance indicators.

9. Concern was expressed about the reduction of the total number of subprogrammes from the original 10 in programmes 5, 7 and 8 to 8 under programme 28. It was felt that this reduction might have negative effects on the implementation of the existing mandates. More specifically, it was considered that the consolidation of former subprogrammes 7.4, 8.1 and 8.2 into, as relevant, the new subprogrammes 28.3, 28.4 and 28.8 resulted in a dilution of the distinct identity of the objectives contained in the approved medium-term plan. The Committee received details showing that all the mandates and objectives of the former subprogrammes had been maintained in the relevant subprogrammes of programme 28. It was emphasized that the establishment of a single departmental structure rationalized the distribution of responsibilities for specific mandates and better grouped human resources so as to improve the overall delivery of the programme. It further provided closer links among analytical, policy and operational activities.

10. Concern was expressed as to whether the proposed revisions had been reviewed by the appropriate intergovernmental bodies. The Committee was informed that, at the time of the meetings of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council relevant to the programme, the present revisions had not then been finalized. However, extensive explanations regarding the rationale for the consolidation of the three departments had been provided to those bodies. Their views as to the effect of the changes on the implementation of the individual subprogrammes had also been sought.

11. Emphasis was placed on the need for the Department to pay particular attention to the special needs of Africa, the least developed countries, small island developing States and South-South cooperation, as discussed in paragraph 28.3. In that connection it was recalled that, while there were no specific subprogrammes dealing with those issues within programme 28, programme 6 of the medium-term plan dealt with the New Agenda for Development of Africa, and concerns for Africa, the least developed countries, small island developing States and South-South cooperation were addressed in each subprogramme.

12. The view was expressed that the issues of coordination and collaboration with United Nations funds and programmes, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions, should be clearly included where warranted, particularly under subprogrammes 28.3, 28.4 and 28.8. It was emphasized that such coordination and collaboration should be carried out in accordance with the mandates of those organs.

13. Concern was expressed about the non-inclusion of the issue of external debt in programme 28. It was indicated to the Committee that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) served as the focal point for this issue. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs would continue to collaborate with UNCTAD in this important area, particularly as a part of its work on the issue of the financing of development.

14. The view was expressed that the Department should address the issue of the recent financial turmoil in Asia, particularly with the view of enhancing the understanding of policy makers to cope with such phenomena in the future.

15. It was observed that the concepts of "civil society" and "best practices" should be better defined. In that context it was suggested that "good practices" would be a more appropriate wording than "best practices".

16. It was also observed that the references to the main legislative mandates for the programme in paragraph 28.4 could be further expanded by reference to other relevant United Nations bodies and conferences.

17. It was suggested that informal briefings be organized regularly for interested delegations by the programme managers of the Department.

Conclusions and recommendations

18. The Committee recommended that the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly consider possible arrangements for the establishment of a programme and/or subprogramme in the medium-term plan on post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction as well as on the transition from relief to development.

19. The Committee recommended approval of the proposed revisions to programme 28 of the medium-term plan, with the following modifications:

Paragraph 28.1

Replace **provide policy guidance** ***with*** **provide support for policy development**

Paragraph 28.3

After **In implementing the programme, particular attention will be paid to** ***add*** **the effective and coordinated implementation of Agenda 21, taking into account the outcome of the 1997 Special Session of the General Assembly, as well as**

Paragraph 28.5 (c)

Replace the paragraph with **(c) Promoted the implementation of agreed plans, strategies, programmes or platforms for action, including the outcome of United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related areas, and monitored, as appropriate, the implementation of agreed plans, strategies, programmes or platforms for action for which the Department is responsible for assisting intergovernmental follow-up and review processes**

Paragraph 28.5 (e)

After **regional** ***insert*** **subregional**

Paragraph 28.5 (f)

After aimed at *insert* the promotion of

After sustained economic growth and sustainable development *insert* in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences, at the request of Governments and in accordance with their national policies,

Paragraph 28.5 (h)

Replace arrangements *with* cooperation

Paragraph 28.5 (i)

Replace including *with* especially

Paragraph 28.6

Replace macroeconomic policy coordination dialogue *with* policy dialogue on macroeconomic issues

Paragraph 28.6 (d)

At the end of the first sentence, add consistent with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and taking into account the role and the mandates of the executive boards of the United Nations funds and programmes

Paragraph 28.6 (e)

At the end of the paragraph add and of the Agenda for Development

Paragraph 28.7

At the end of the paragraph, add consistent with the Declaration and Platform for Action of the Beijing Conference

Paragraph 28.8 (c)

Replace the paragraph with To contribute to the development and strengthening of human rights mechanisms dealing specifically with women's human rights, including the provision of technical support for the working group on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or the increased use of existing mechanisms, in particular in the context of the coordination and follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Paragraph 28.11

Replace the phrase as well as the resolutions and decisions of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and the Committee on Natural Resources *with* as well as the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council on the recommendation of bodies responsible for energy and natural resources

Paragraphs 28.13 (b) and (c)

Merge the two paragraphs by making paragraph 28.13 (c) the last sentence of paragraph 28.13 (b), and reletter the subsequent paragraphs accordingly

Paragraph 28.13 (f)

In the last sentence, after General Assembly *insert* and the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

Renumber revised paragraph 28.13 (f) as 28.12, and renumber the subsequent paragraphs accordingly

Paragraph 28.13 (h)

After To support *insert* international cooperation, in particular

After regional *insert* and subregional

Paragraph 28.13 (i) (ii)

Replace water resources management *with* water resources development, management and use

Paragraph 28.14 (e)

Replace this paragraph with paragraph 8.8 (d) of the current medium-term plan

Paragraph 28.18 (b)

At the end of the paragraph, add and to monitor changes in the external debt situation and to identify innovative approaches and strategies to resolve the difficulties of countries with debt-servicing problems

Subprogramme 28.8

Replace the title with Public Administration, Finance and Development

Paragraph 28.19

Replace with the following:

> 28.19 The subprogramme, being implemented by the Division for Public Economics and Public Administration, is to assist in intergovernmental policy deliberations on the role of public administration, public finance and public economics in the development process. The subprogramme also provides assistance to interested Governments of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in strengthening their capacity for socio-economic development management, including infrastructure, which is necessary for their institutional and human resources development as well as policy analysis and policy-making, and also in implementing relevant commitments agreed upon at major United Nations conferences. The subprogramme will also ensure interface between the intergovernmental policy deliberations and the relevant operational work of the organizations of the United Nations system active in this field, in particular the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank.

Legislative mandates: Subprogramme 28.7

Add General Assembly resolution 52/185 – Enhancing international cooperation towards a durable solution to the external debt problem of developing countries.